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The Federal Diary

Innovations Mark Personnel System Discussed by FAA

By Jerry Kluttz

FEDERAL AVIATION hopes to develop a personnel system for its 34,000 employees within "the Government's basic civilian framework" but with interesting innovations. For example, it has tentatively approved a revised plan which would provide:



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- Broad authority for the Administrator to set salaries for FAA's essential employees up to 20 per cent in excess of those that can be paid under the salary-fixing Classification Act.

- Require these same employees to give a minimum of 60 days notice before they could resign in peacetime. During wartime, they would, in effect, be frozen in their jobs under the President's war powers.

- Wide power for the Administrator to assign employees to work at worldwide locations under all conditions, including war and peace. A rotation system would be set up, somewhat similar to that used by the Foreign Service, to provide ground support for the hundreds of overseas military bases.

- Exemption from active military service for FAA's many employees in military-support activities. A spot check revealed that 25 per cent of the essential employees are members of a military reserve and subject to active military service at any time. FAA hopes to work out arrangements with Defense and Selective Service to exempt its key personnel from active military service as long as the employees hold military-support jobs.

The report also suggests location, travel and moving allowances in excess of those now available in most Federal agencies for its employees who are transferred to different geographical areas. The employees would be provided housing, if none is available at FAA locations, and they and their families would be made eligible for treatment at military medical facilities and to make purchases at military commissaries. The report also hints at earlier retirement on full annuities if a study under way proves the need for it.

FAA officials reveal that the agency's top command has rejected a proposal by the 10-man readiness team that a separate uniformed and militarized corps be set up to guarantee FAA services to military and civilian aviation in both peace and war.

ADMINISTRATOR E. R. QUESADA must recommend a FAA personnel plan to Congress by Jan. 1. In calling for the report, the Senate Commerce Committee expressed the feeling that the plan should be along civilian lines.

"We're trying," an official said, "to carry out the Committee's desire." He conceded, however, that many problems remain to be solved.

The Attorney General is said to have been asked to rule on a series of questions regarding the rights of FAA and its employees in times of peace, emergency and war.

In wartime, some lawyers believe, the President would have the power to freeze essential FAA and other Federal employees in their jobs. The civilian personnel system doesn't present insurmountable problems during periods of peace.

But FAA and other officials are concerned over emergency periods such as that which existed when our military forces landed in Lebanon in 1958. Under the plan to have FAA take over world-wide military navigation and control facilities, its employees would have to be in the area to support the military operation.

What if the FAA employees decide the area is too dangerous and leave their jobs? There's doubt that FAA could even discipline them if they did.

Essential FAA employees already are under orders from the Administrator to remain at their posts during civil and air defense emergencies. Officials say his authority to require such service is questionable and that he has no means to enforce it. These are some of the perplexing questions facing FAA and that's why the revised plan would give the Administrator broad authority to assign employees.

In effect, FAA is willing to give its employees better pay and other benefits in return for restrictions on the right to quit their jobs and to work where they please.

The range of Classification Act salaries is \$2960 to \$17,500 which would be boosted a maximum of 20 per cent under the revised plan. FAA hopes to continue its entire staff, which eventually will grow to more than 50,000 (it's 34,000 now), under the regular Civil Service and Classification Acts but with variations.

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